

The Battle for Power

(New Jersey probably had a more important role in the establishment and development of railroads than any other state in the country. This article, the seventh of a series, deals with the railroad monopolists who, seeking to realize profitable returns on early investments, fought the granting of charters for new lines. Aroused public sentiment eventually forced passage of legislation to break the stranglehold on cross-state business.)

TEMPORARILY the Camden & Amboy's officials, the "Earls of Bordentown" and "Marquises of Hoboken" were out of the headlines as the nation turned to contemplate the horrors of a Civil War. The "Earls" and the "Marquises" (as their opponents dubbed them) knew they weren't forgotten, but state's grievances against them had to be postponed.

It had always been a certainty that the Camden & Amboy would some day have to give up the incredible monopoly it held on railroad traffic between New York and Philadelphia from its inception in 1830. Just as the power of the Monopoly grew, so advanced the public sentiment against it. Eventually the latter was bound to catch up.

At Civil War time, however, the Monopoly was stronger than ever. No railroad builder would dare to think of laying new tracks without giving careful thought to what the Monopoly would say.

DESPITE its stranglehold on cross-state business, the Camden & Amboy couldn't point with any great pride to track improvements by Civil War time. It wasn't ready to handle the great volumes of New York-Philadelphia trade which the war precipitated, because in 1860 it was still a single-track line from New Brunswick to Trenton.

As a matter of fact, by 1860 the only double-tracked railroads in the state were the New Jersey, from New Brunswick to Jersey City; the Jersey Central, from Hampton to Elizabethport, and the Erie, from Paterson to Jersey City.

Regardless of track, all stood in awe of the Monopoly, because not only did it control traffic on the vital New York to Philadelphia route; it also exercised indirect control of the Hoboken-Jersey City waterfront through its various connections.

This power led, directly or indirectly, to some of the state's most intriguing railroad "wars"—the Jersey Central's "Garbage War" with

**MOTHERS LOOK OUT FOR YOUR CHILDREN!
ARTISANS, MECHANICS, CITIZENS!**

When you leave your family in health, must you be hurried home to mourn a

DREADFUL CASUALTY!

PHILADELPHIANS, your RIGHTS are being invaded! regardless of your interests, or the LIVES OF YOUR LITTLE ONES. THE CAMDEN AND AMBOY, with the assistance of other companies, without a Charter, and in VIOLATION OF LAW as decreed by your Courts, are laying a

LOCOMOTIVE RAIL ROAD!

Through your most Beautiful Streets, to the RUIN of your TRADE, annihilation of your RIGHTS, and regardless of your PROSPERITY and COMFORT. Will you permit this? or do you consent to be a

SUBURB OF NEW YORK!!

Rails are now being laid on BROAD STREET to CONNECT the TRENTON RAIL ROAD with the WILMINGTON and BALTIMORE ROAD, under the pretence of constructing a City Passenger Railway from the Navy Yard to Fairmount!!! This is done under the auspices of the CAMDEN AND AMBOY MONOPOLY!

RALLY PEOPLE in the Majesty of your Strength and forbid THIS OUTRAGE!

This copy of an anti-monopoly poster, which appeared in Philadelphia, was similar to other handbills distributed in Jersey towns.

Jersey City, the "Frog War" at Hopewell in Mercer County and the "Tunnel War" out in the Meadows. More of these later, but first to the Monopoly.

In the beginning, back in 1830, you couldn't blame the capitalists who

without any of the worry of setting the table.

You couldn't blame the state, either, for believing that it was a good deal when the C. & A. gave New Jersey 1,000 shares of stock worth at least \$100,000.

'Garbage,' 'Tunnel' and 'Frog' Wars Spiced the Struggle as Roads Sought New State Charters

BY JOHN T. CUNNINGHAM

built the Camden & Amboy for insisting on a monopoly. Other money-men didn't rush forward with funds to help build. Rather, they held back—figuring that if the C. & A. made money they would ram a railroad through right alongside and help eat the gravy

"You realize, of course," said the Camden & Amboy, "that if any competing railroad gets a charter you lose the stocks?"

Figuratively the state nodded its head.

What happened thereafter is a

familiar story. The Monopoly grew too big for its boundaries. First it lobbied, then it entered politics actively and by 1850 the state's politicians found themselves hooked. Opinions on the Monopoly range from unmitigated vituperation to unconvincing whitewashes. The truth probably is somewhere in-between.

The word soon got out to the legislators: "Make sure to stop into Apartment No. 10 at Snowden's Hotel in Trenton." Visiting politicians were assured "no one connected with the Legislature need go to bed sober for want of champagne or with empty stomach for want of food."

Some of the newspapers mentioned bitterly that railroad matters weren't healthy in Trenton. To make certain the public got the facts as the Monopoly saw them, the group bought a Trenton paper and started a new weekly over in Freehold.

LITTLE wonder, then, that the Monopoly made and broke legislators and played vital roles in electing or defeating governors. Little wonder that bills friendly to the Monopoly were rushed through legislative sessions while unfriendly bills languished in committee. Little wonder that an occasional judge seemed, well, confused, when a Monopoly matter came up.

Then, in 1848, the "Citizen of Burlington" (later revealed as Harry C. Carey, noted political economist) charged in a series of published letters that the state was being gouged—and worse—by the Camden & Amboy.

"Shocking, shocking," said the Assembly. "We'll appoint a commission."

Selection of the committee was left to the Joint Companies! The committee gravely exonerated the group which had selected it, but paradoxically, so favorable was the report, that public clamor led to appointment of a new commission.

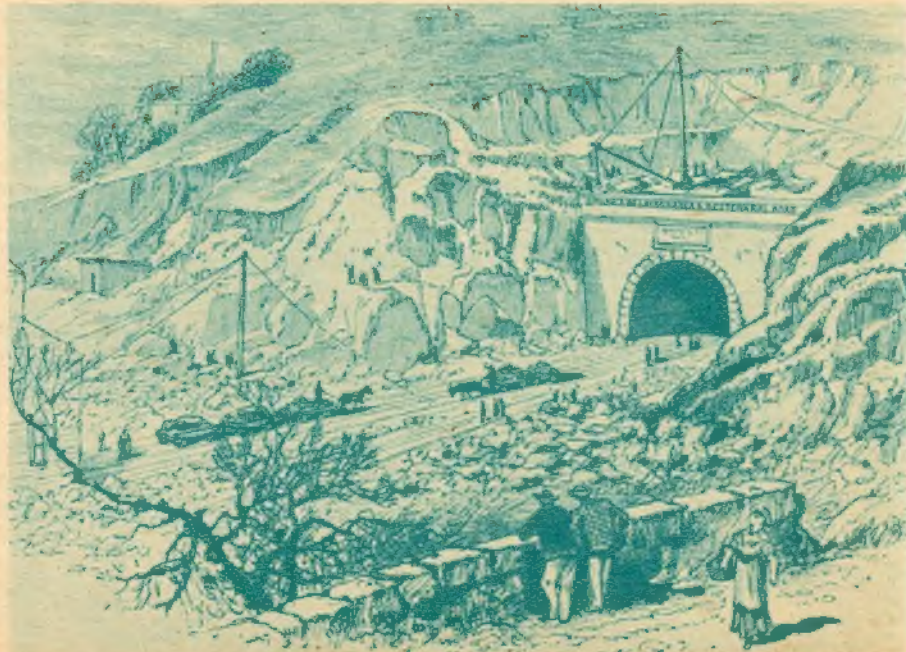
The new commission's report was generally favorable to the Monopoly, although it found some evidence that Carey was right. Still, it was charged up to bookkeeping errors.

THE Monopoly emerged unshaken and in 1850 solidified its political position in Trenton. By 1860 the Monopoly was stronger than ever—and it decided to pull a squeeze play on the New Jersey Railroad, which formed the link between New Brunswick and Jersey City for the Camden & Amboy.

Edwin A. Stevens, treasurer of the



South Cove's mud flats before it was filled in with New York "garbage."



Erie clash forced D. L. & W. to build its own tunnel.



"Barricade of Locomotives" was title of this sketch which appeared with New York Illustrated Graphic article of January 10, 1867, on "frog war."

Camden & Amboy had gradually acquired a substantial interest in the Morris & Essex Railroad (from Newark to Dover). In 1857, Stevens and his Hoboken Land and Improvement Company applied for a charter to build a new line to Newark to connect with the Morris & Essex.

The squeeze was on.

The New Jersey Railroad leaders squirmed. It sought to lease the M. & E. and it threatened to build a new line across state to compete with the Camden & Amboy. Noble proposals—except that Stevens influenced the M. & E. and the Camden & Amboy Monopoly controlled the Legislature, which in turn granted charters for new lines.

SUDDENLY two bills popped up in the Legislature. One gave Jersey Central the right to build a bridge over Newark Bay to extend its road to Jersey City. The second called for incorporation of the New Brunswick, Millburn and Orange Railroad.

That gave the Monopoly three clubs to swing at the New Jersey Railroad. It could say, in effect:

"First, we'll wallop you with the new extension from Hoboken. We'll only use one of the other big sticks—either we'll connect with the Jersey Central at Elizabeth or we'll build that new railroad up to Orange and connect with the M. & E."

The New Jersey Railroad must have felt like a tomato vine with its roots cut off. It held out for seven years but its capitulation was inevitable. In 1867 it agreed to consolidate with the Camden & Amboy and the Delaware & Raritan Canal to form a joint company, which gave the Monopoly complete control of all traffic crossing the state between New York and Philadelphia.

JERSEY CENTRAL, on the other hand, found itself thrust into a pleasant position by the newly-found friendship of the Monopoly. It had long been stymied by having to send its freight into Jersey City by way of the New Jersey Railroad. Now it could have its own terminal across from New York.

There were a couple of geographic items in the way, however—the broadness of Newark Bay and the fact that in Jersey City only the miserable mud flats of South Cove were available for a terminal location.

Bridging the two-mile-wide bay was a notable engineering job, but, faced though they were with building the longest bridge of its type in the world

the Central engineers accomplished the feat in two years. Passenger traffic started over the bridge in 1864 and freight traffic followed two years later.

South Cove was another matter.

The first time Central's president,

John Taylor Johnston, gazed at the Cove he saw only mud flats washed by sluggish tides, an area long considered the special preserve of oyster planters and boat fishermen.

Great amounts of fill obviously were needed. "Why not use New

York City garbage?" Johnston mused, and the Garbage War was underway.

MONTH after month boats plodded methodically across the Hudson River, bringing the city's refuse to South Cove. Gradually the fill showed above the water, stretched 1,000 feet into the river. Day after day the angry but futile protests of Jersey City residents flowed Jersey Central's way, complaining of the reeking odors. The dumping went on, until at last Jersey Central had its present harbor terminal, built on ancient fishing grounds and New York garbage!

Never let it be said, of course, that Jersey Central was permitted to do all of this without more than a token bow to the Monopoly. The price—a guaranteed two-thirds of all New York-Harrisburg business to the Camden & Amboy!

The M. & E. arrived at Hoboken in 1862 via the Stevens branch line. Stevens also gave financial aid to the Erie Railroad as it blasted its tunnel through Bergen Hill between 1857 and 1860 so that M. & E. trains could use it. The Morris and Essex was leased by the Lackawanna in 1868 but use of the tunnel continued harmoniously—for a while.

As long as the M. & E. trains came in only from Morristown and points west the Erie had no complaint. However, it was a different story when the Boonton Branch of the Lackawanna was built to Hoboken by way of Paterson in 1870. The Erie felt that to be a definite infringement of its Paterson territory; when the time came for a physical rail connection outside Bergen Tunnel trouble flared.

"Prince Erie"—Jim Fisk—took matters into his own hands early in December, 1870.

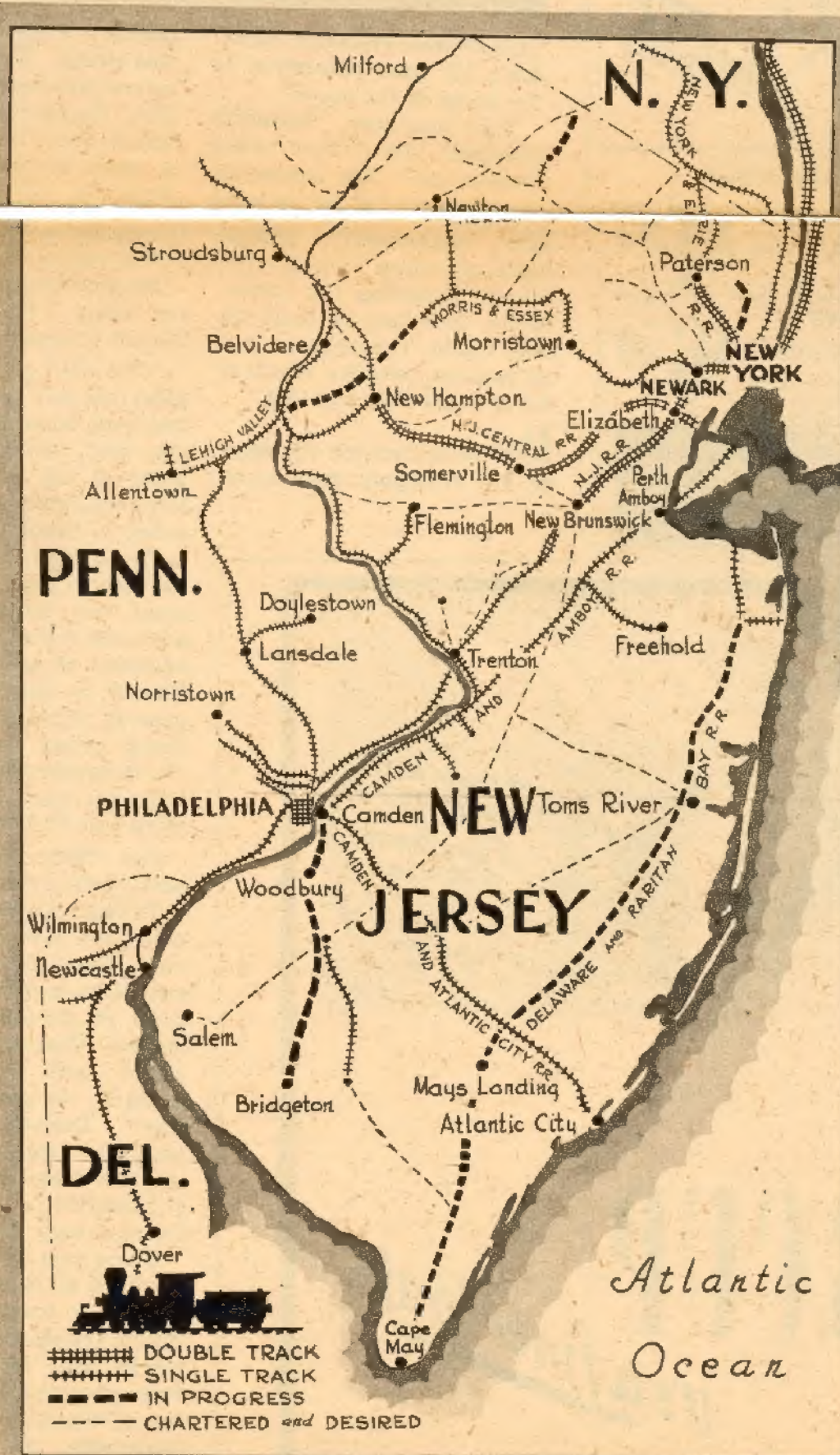
FIRST he had a locomotive placed across the mouth of the tunnel and he brought 1,000 men to see that it wasn't moved. The fact that no Erie trains moved either was a matter of small amount to Fisk. As long as the Lackawanna trains were stopped "Prince Erie" was happy.

Thousands of angry passengers milled around the tunnel. Violence seemed imminent when Governor Randolph hastened to the tunnel, meanwhile alerting a company of militia.

"Take that locomotive off the tracks, Jim," Randolph ordered. "You're holding up the mails. If you

(Continued on Following Page)

NETWORK OF TRANSPORTATION LINES



Reproduction of 1860 map shows existing and projected railroads.

NEWARK NEWS

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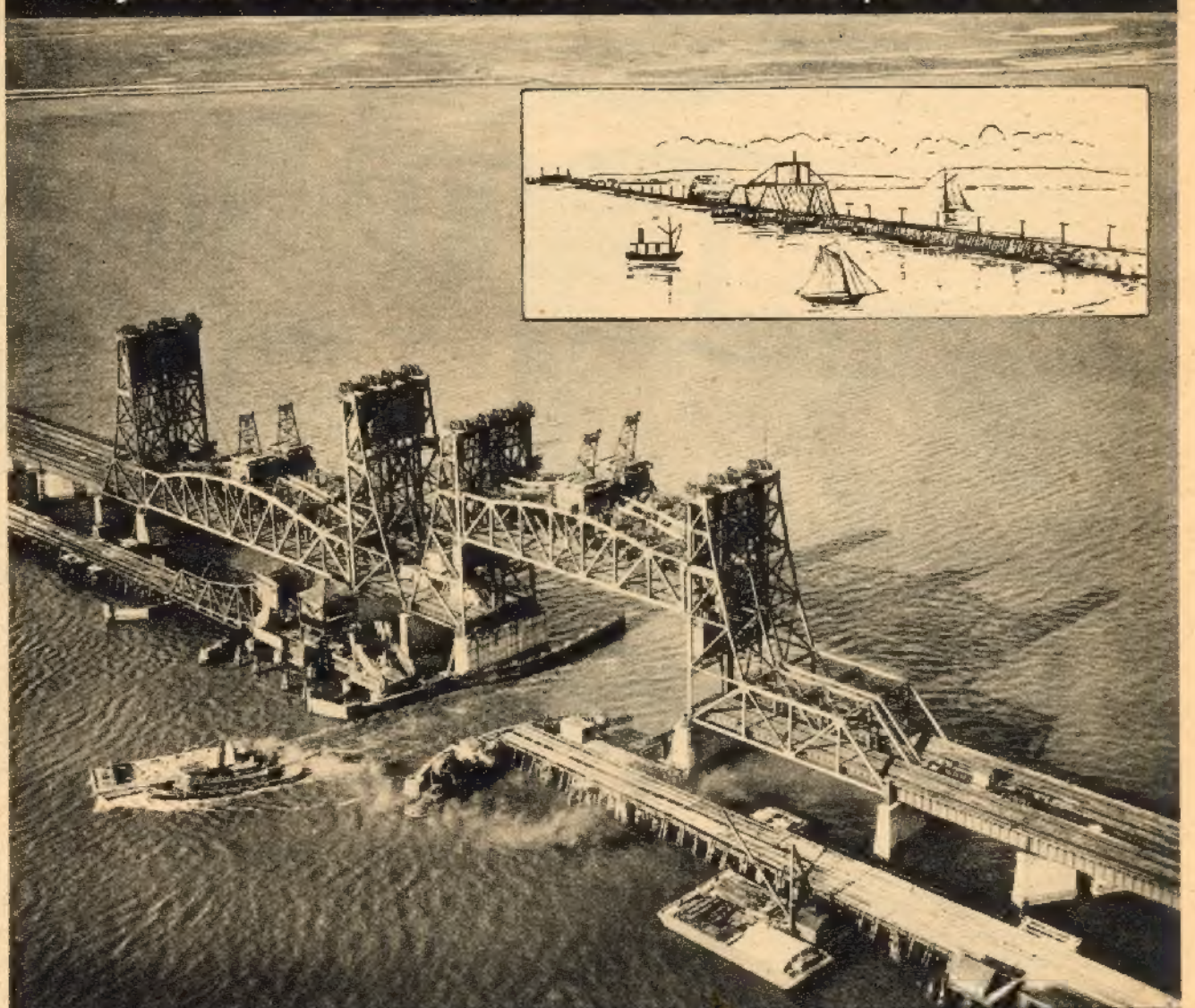
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JERSEY RAILROADS—The Battle for Power



Present Newark Bay Bridge of the Jersey Central is shown shortly after being placed in operation on November 27, 1926. Running parallel is span it replaced a "jack-knife" bridge built in 1904. Insert shows the original two-mile long, two-track timber trestle which was opened to rail traffic in 1864.

(Cont'd from Preceding Page)
don't I'll take possession in the name of the state."

Fisk hesitated. Randolph snapped, "And I have troops to back me." The locomotive was removed but for days the Erie intentionally slowed down all trains through the tunnel, deepening the Lackawanna intention to build its own tunnel through the hill as soon as possible, which it did between 1874 and 1876.

DOWN in Trenton the days of the Monopoly were num-

bered. Public indignation was rising. Even some legislators were beginning to rebel. The Pennsylvania Railroad was in the offing, looking for a route to New York. On June 30, 1871, the United Companies were leased to the Pennsylvania for 999 years.

No great joy was stirred by the lease. The New York Herald commented:

"The halo of New Jersey's glory has left her. Her Ichabod hath departed. The Camden and Amboy road, the pride of the state and the ruler of Legislatures, has been ceded to Pennsylvania."

The United Companies got out just in time. State sentiment was barreling toward a general railroad law and the abolition of special charters. Finally, on April 2, 1873, the general railroad law was enacted, giving competitors of the Pennsylvania the right to cross the state between New York and Philadelphia.

But there was still one battle left in the Monopoly.

Taking advantage of the new state law, the Delaware and Bound Brook Railroad started to build from Jenkintown, Pa., to connect with the Jersey Central at Bound Brook (and to form, incidentally, the present Reading line). Directly across the projected right-of-way was the now long-defunct Mercer & Somerset, a branch of the Pennsylvania Railroad.

There was no trouble until the D. & B. B. had to put its "frog" or crossover connection in the Mercer & Somerset tracks near Hopewell. The Pennsylvania stopped the laying of the frog by placing a locomotive on the tracks

where the connection was contemplated.

On the bitterly cold night of January 5, 1876, the locomotive backed into a siding to let a through train pass. Immediately 200 D. & B. B. workers chained the engine fast to the siding, then set out to barricade the track while they put in their frog.

MEANWHILE, orders went out to bring Engine 336 down from Millstone to ram the barricade. Old 336 made the 11 miles in 15 minutes and went roaring through the barricade, sending ties, rails tools and lanterns scattering. She nosed into the soft earth at the side of the tracks.

The next morning 1,500 people were on hand, many of them armed, and most of them friendly to the D. & B. B. crowd. In midafternoon four companies of Trenton militia marched at double time to the scene. Reporters "swarmed over the scene like bees at a molasses keg." One false move and skulls would have been cracked, squirrel guns would have sounded.

There was no false move and on January 7 word came from the Chancellor in Trenton that the new Bound Brook line could lay its frog and continue its line to Bound Brook.

The partisan crowd cheered wildly. Down on those Mercer Plains the right of any railroad to New Jersey to build in New Jersey was at last proved. Now the railroads could get on to the business of trying to win back some of the customers they had forgotten while they battled for power.

Next Week: The public rebels against hazardous rail travel